

October 23, 2009

**Weekly Update: H1N1 – A New Kind of Flu – What You Need to Know!**

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**Local Hospital Capacity**

H1N1 flu is widespread across the country. This flu is currently more prevalent in Kansas than seasonal flu is during a typical flu season's peak, which often occurs in February. Locally, Mercy Hospital reported today that they are full. Additionally, the Emergency Room is receiving double the number of patients in the last few days, mostly due to influenza-like symptoms. Please remember that most otherwise healthy people who contract the flu do not need to go to the doctor or emergency room. Staying hydrated and getting plenty of rest can save a trip to the emergency room.

**Availability of Vaccine**

The Riley County-Manhattan Health Department will be holding an **H1N1 vaccination clinic Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 until 5:30 PM or until supply is depleted**. Currently, H1N1 vaccine is only available through the health department. We anticipate that some local private health providers will have some vaccine within the next few weeks. We currently have a limited supply of H1N1 vaccine, including FluMist, which is a nasal spray live vaccine for the H1N1 flu virus. Anyone eligible for FluMist is encouraged to take that over the injectable vaccine because the injectable is especially in short supply and some people can only have that type of vaccine. Also, future vaccine shipments to the community are dependent upon use of all available vaccine.

FluMist vaccine will be offered to two healthy population groups (in no particular order). If you have questions regarding what constitutes "healthy", please consult your physician:

- 1) Children between the ages of 2 and 9 years who have no health problems, and
- 2) Health care workers who are 49 years of age or younger, who are healthy and not pregnant, and who are likely to be in close contact with flu infected persons.

H1N1 flu shots will be offered, according to the high risk designation of the National Center for Disease Control (CDC), to the following population groups (in no particular order):

- 1) Pregnant women
- 2) Children between the ages of 6 months and 4 years
- 3) Children between the ages of 5 and 18 years who have chronic health conditions
- 4) Health care workers who work directly with persons who are likely to be infected
- 5) Persons who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months of age

**Eligibility**

As more vaccine becomes available in the coming weeks, the guidelines for who is eligible to receive it will broaden to the CDC's expanded categories of high risk populations. In addition to current eligibility, this will include youth through 24 years of age and adults 25-64 with underlying chronic health conditions. After that, if supply continues, the general public will become eligible for vaccine. We receive very little and variable notice of vaccine availability. When any changes occur in eligibility, we will post it on our website.

**Where can I find current, local information about H1N1?**

You can monitor availability and eligibility information at [www.rileycountyks.gov](http://www.rileycountyks.gov) under **H1N1 Local Info**. We recommend that you check the website several times a week. You may also call 776-4779, extension 297 for brief availability information.

**Cost**

H1N1 vaccine is free. Fees for administration of the vaccine will be billed to insurance. Only insurance will be billed, not individuals. Persons without insurance coverage for the vaccine will not be charged at the health department.

**Forms**

Persons who qualify should complete their paperwork in advance of coming to an H1N1 vaccination clinic at the health department, if possible. Necessary forms can be found online at [www.rileycountyks.gov](http://www.rileycountyks.gov) under **H1N1 Local Info**.

**Protect Your Family**

The H1N1 vaccine has an excellent safety profile. It has been extensively tested and it cannot give you the flu. It is important to remember that the science of flu vaccine is safe and well established. What is different this year is this particular virus, which has shown capability to attack a younger age group and sometimes cause serious complications. The H1N1 vaccine is your best defense against this flu. We recommend that people get vaccinated as soon as it becomes available for their population or age group. Simple healthy habits will also help protect you, such as hand washing, covering your cough, and staying home when you are sick.